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## PRESS RELEASE

### **USAID's Access to Justice Program Awards First Round of Assistance Grants to Local NGOs and Vulnerable Populations of Iraq**

**BAGHDAD, IRAQ:** The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), together with program partners convened Wednesday, September 14, 2011, in Baghdad to award the first round of grants funded by the US Government through USAID's Iraq Access to Justice Program. Representatives of Government of Iraq ministries, the U.S. Embassy and other partner organizations attended the meeting, at which NGOs, law schools, and other civil society organizations received grants with the purpose of providing legal aid and enhancing legal assistance to underserved and disadvantaged populations across Iraq. These groups include women, widows, divorcees, orphans, internally displaced persons, persons with disabilities, minorities, and those who lack state protection and services, such as individuals without formal identity documents or legal status in Iraq.

USAID's Access to Justice Program is working with Iraqi NGOs and civil society partners to provide information and advocacy to these vulnerable populations so that they can access the benefits and services that are rightfully theirs and more fully realize their legal rights.

The Access to Justice Program will award over \$6 million in grants. The first round of grants highlighted at this event are valued at over \$1.2 million, distributed through 15 separate grant awards to Iraqi civil society organizations. Each grant is valued at approximately \$81,000 and they have been designated to support projects between six to twelve months in duration.

The meeting was attended by representatives of the new grantee partners and other organizations, all of whom shared their vision and experience serving vulnerable populations. All participants spoke about plans for making service and assistance to these groups sustainable through continued internal support and lasting legislative and curricular reforms.

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